

# U.S. Considers New North Korea Talks

The United States is in discussions with its diplomatic partners in Asia on the potential resumption of talks on North Korea's nuclear program, U.S. officials said last month.

They cautioned that progress is unlikely in the near future, as Pyongyang still must meet certain conditions before negotiations could resume. During visits to China, Japan, and South Korea for discussions on the possible renewal of denuclearization talks, U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth told reporters Sept. 15 that "it is going to take some time" for negotiations to resume, adding that North Korea must show that it is prepared to take "specific and concrete" actions.

When asked during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing the following day what conditions need to be met before talks could restart, Kurt Campbell, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, said "an essential first step...needs to be some sort of re-engagement between North and South Korea."

Tensions between the two countries increased dramatically in March with the sinking of the South Korean patrol ship *Cheonan*, believed to have been caused by a North Korean torpedo attack. (See *ACT*, May 2010.) U.S. and South Korean of-

ficials said following the suspected attack that efforts to re-engage North Korea on the nuclear issue would need to be delayed until the incident was resolved.

Although North Korea has denied any involvement in the sinking of the *Cheonan*, making an early resolution of the incident unlikely, the two Koreas have engaged in some efforts to improve relations in recent weeks. Bosworth said during a Sept. 16 press briefing that "there is some reason to be somewhat optimistic that [North-South re-engagement] has begun."

North and South Korea held a series of discussions in September over the possibility of reuniting families separated since the 1950-1953 Korean War. Those talks are scheduled to continue this month.

U.S. officials have said that in addition to improving relations with Seoul, Pyongyang must show that it is prepared



Kurt Campbell, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs

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U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth speaks to reporters in Beijing September 16.